Detenues in Pakistani Jails

*164. SHRIMATI SARALA MAHESHWARI:
SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Plea to free Punjabi detenues languishing in Pakistani jails" which appeared in the "Hindustan Times' dated the 20th June, 2001;

(b) the number of Indian Citizens languishing in jails of Pakistan; and

(c) what steps have been taken to get them released?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) According to available information, there are 196 Indian fishermen, 54 Prisoners of War (PoWs) and 840 other civilian prisoners currently in Pakistani custody. Government have consistently taken up the issue of release of Indian prisoners and detainees with Pakistan.

On 26.6.2001 Pakistan agreed to release 196 Indian fishermen. Pakistan has also agreed to release 31 detenues in Pakistani jails, 28 of whom are from Punjab. Governments efforts to address this humanitarian issue will be vigorously pursued. During his talks with Pakistan President in Agra on 15.7.2001, Prime Minister urged Pakistan for the early release of Indians in Pakistani custody.